

**BRIAN O'CONNELL /  
House Beautiful**

Brian O'Connell ist fasziniert von Ordnungen und Gegenüberstellungen, die sich aus rein formalen Kombinationen von Objekten ergeben, die jeweils aus völlig divergenten, diskursiven Bereichen stammen. Durch scheinbar irrtümliche und absurde Paarungen innerhalb seiner Ausstellungen untersuchen seine Arbeiten das Potential solcher Herleitungen im Kontext von Geschichte und Politik als Mittel zum Zweck. Sie verweisen auf Möglichkeiten der Rhetorik und übersetzen diese in eine visuelle Sprache aus miteinander konkurrierender Formen, Formalismen und Utopien.

Im Stil des Sozialistischen Realismus plante Hermann Henselmann in den 50-er Jahren die Architektur des Strausberger Platzes. Dort präsentiert Brian O'Connell nun zwei Werkgruppen - House Beautiful und Nomadic Morris.

House Beautiful besteht aus einer Skulptur und einer Serie von Fotografien, die sich mit Mondrians quadratischen Kompositionen auseinandersetzen.

Aus der zweiten Skulptur "Nomadic Morris Template" können unendlich viele Pappmodelle einer Arbeit von Robert Morris produziert werden. Die Konstruktion bezieht sich auf das 1973 von James Hennessy und Victor Papanek herausgegebene Buch "Nomadic Furniture".

House Beautiful nennt der in New York lebende Künstler O'Connell auch seine Ausstellung. Der Titel leitet sich von einer der bekanntesten amerikanischen Wohn- und Einrichtungszeitschriften ab. 1953 zur Hochzeit der McCarthy Ära bezog das Magazin in dem Artikel "Threat to the Next America" öffentlich Stellung gegen den in Design und Architektur vorherrschenden International Style hinter dem eine kommunistische Verschwörung vermutet wurde. Anhand von Mies van der Rohes Farnsworth House erstellte die Herausgeberin Elisabeth Gordon eine Liste charakteristischer Merkmalen des International Style:

*Flat roofs*

*Smooth surfaces*

*Walls that look like Mondrian compositions*

*Cubist structures on stilts*

*Favoring of stark black and white although occasional use of 2 or 3 primary colors*

*Abhorrence of ornamentation and decoration*

*Elimination of partition walls so that a house tends to be one public room with open areas for sleeping, eating, playing, etc.*

*Maximum use of glass without any corrective devices for shade or privacy*

*Disregard for site and climate, whether on desert or in city with few or no protective measures against sun, heat, cold, rain. Emphasis on collective, block-house apartments, built according to above characteristics*

Die Konzeption von Brian O'Connells Ausstellung, die Verbindungen und Verschränkungen von Form und Inhalt sind ganzheitlich übergreifend und erzeugen ein komplexes Beziehungsgeflecht, seine Kunst wird dadurch Vehikel genauer formaler Betrachtung und inhaltlicher Reflexion.



## **Checkliste**

*Composition C; Composition with Gray and Red, 2007*

*Fotogramm*

*Filter: CYAN*

*98,5 x 78 cm*

*Composition C; Composition with Gray and Red, 2007*

*Fotogramm*

*Filter: YELLOW*

*98,5 x 78 cm*

*Composition C; Composition with Gray and Red, 2007*

*Fotogramm*

*Filter: MAGENTA*

*98,5 x 78 cm*

*Composition No.1; Composition with Red and Black, 2007*

*Fotogramm*

*Filter: CYAN*

*98,5 x 78 cm*

*Composition No.1; Composition with Red and Black, 2007*

*Fotogramm*

*Filter: YELLOW*

*98,5 x 78 cm*

*Composition No.1; Composition with Red and Black, 2007*

*Fotogramm*

*Filter: MAGENTA*

*98,5 x 78 cm*

*Composition C; Composition with Gray and Red, 2007*

*Fotogramm*

*dreifach belichtet / cyan, yellow, magenta*

*98,5 x 78 cm*

*Composition No.1; Composition with Red and Black, 2007*

*Fotogramm*

*dreifach belichtet / cyan, yellow, magenta*

*98,5 x 78 cm*

*Nomadic Morris , 2007*

*furniertes Holz*

*Karton*

*Größe variabel*

*House Beautiful, 2007*

*Glas, Messing*

*96 x 75,5 x 113,5 cm*

*Ed. 2 + 1 AP*

### THE INTERNATIONAL STYLE

You can recognize the International Style by a combination of these characteristics (remember some of the first 7 may occur in great modern architecture):

- Flat roofs.
- Smooth surfaces.
- Walls that look like flat-panel compositions (rectangles within rectangles see below).
- Cubist structures on sites (steel or concrete).
- Finishing of dark black and white although occasional use of 2 or 3 primary colors.
- Absence of ornamentation and decoration.
- Elimination of partition walls so that a house needs to be one public room with open areas for sleeping, eating, playing, etc.
- Maximum use of glass without any weather devices for shade or privacy.
- Disregard for site and climate whether on desert or in city with few or no protective measures against sun, heat, cold, etc.
- Emphasis on collective, block-house apartments, built according to above characteristics.

### THE BAUHAUS

A school of design for poster art, architecture, furniture and the like, started in Weimar, Germany, in 1919 by Walter Gropius (now a practicing architect in the U.S.). He was replaced as director by Communist architect Hannes Meyer, who gave way in 1930 to Peter van der Rabe (also practicing architecture here). Bauhaus style is part of "International Style" (above). Bauhaus furniture design has a "sterile look": sterile, cold, raw, uncomfortable.

### MONDRIAN



Bauhaus and International Style's design houses, furniture to look like typical Mondrian compositions (left): flat, bounded, carefully symmetrical rectangles of very few colors. Pieter Mondrian was key figure in Dutch school of Cubism called de Stijl.



***House Beautiful, 2007***  
*Glas, Messing*  
*96 x 75,5 x 113,5 CM*  
*Ed. 2 + 1 AP*





*Composition C; Composition with Gray and Red, 2007*  
Fotogramm  
dreifach belichtet / cyan, yellow, magenta  
98,5 x 78 cm

*Nomadic Morris, 2007*  
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*Brian O'Connell is fascinated by the structures and comparisons that result from formal juxtapositions of objects taken from widely divergent contexts. In his exhibitions, O'Connell employs apparently erroneous and absurd combinations as a means of exploring the potential of such relationships in historical and political contexts. His constructions represent the possibilities of rhetoric, and translate them into a visual language of competing forms, formalisms and utopias. In the 1950s, Hermann Henselmann planned the Strausberger Platz according to the architectural tenets of Socialist Realism. Brian O'Connell is now presenting two sets of work in these surroundings - House Beautiful and Nomadic Morris. House Beautiful is comprised of a sculpture and a series of photograms which reference Mondrian's square compositions. Meanwhile, it is possible to reconstruct a Robert Morris work from the cardboard models using the adjacent "Nomadic Morris Template" sculpture, a reference to the book "Nomadic Furniture", which was published by James Hennessy and Victor Papanek in 1973.*

*O'Connell, who lives in New York, has chosen "House Beautiful" for the exhibition title. This is derived from one of the most popular domestic-design magazines in America. At the height of the McCarthy era in 1953, the magazine published an article under the title "The Threat to the Next America", in which it was intimated that the prevailing International Style of design and architecture was part of the communist conspiracy. Using Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House as an example, the magazine's chief editor Elisabeth Gordon made a list of the offending style's characteristic features:*

*Flat roofs*

*Smooth surfaces*

*Walls that look like Mondrian compositions*

*Cubist structures on stilts*

*Favouring of stark black and white, although occasional use of 2 or 3 primary colours*

*Abhorrence of ornamentation and decoration*

*Elimination of partition walls, so that a house tends to be one public room with open areas for sleeping, eating, playing, etc.*

*Maximum use of glass without any corrective devices for shade or privacy*

*Disregard for site and climate, whether in the desert or in a city, with few or no protective measures against sun, heat, cold, and rain. Emphasis on collective, block-house apartments, built according to the above characteristics*

*Brian O'Connell's concept, and the resulting interconnection of form and content, pervades the entire exhibition, creating complex formal and associative links as a vehicle for enhancing the perception of form and encouraging reflection on content.*